Public Libraries Consultative Committee (PLCC)

45th Extraordinary Meeting of the Library Council Sub-committee to be held on Thursday 25 October 2007 in the Jean Garling Room, State Library of New South Wales, at 10am

(lunch will be provided)

In August 2007, the Minister for the Arts announced an independent review of public library funding in NSW, to be conducted by Dr Tom Parry. This extraordinary PLCC meeting has been called to give Dr Parry the opportunity to consult with the key public library stakeholders on the funding review. Mr Shane McMahon and Mr Martyn Killion from Arts NSW will be attending the meeting with Dr Parry.

Agenda

1. Welcome to Dr Thomas Parry, Shane McMahon and Martyn Killion Chairperson, Public Libraries Consultative Committee

2. Introductions of meeting participants Chairperson, Public Libraries Consultative Committee

3. PLCC Chair outlines the terms of engagement for the meeting Chairperson, Public Libraries Consultative Committee

   Action: For information and discussion

4. Current Public Library Funding Strategy Assistant State Librarian, Public Library Services

   Action: For information and discussion

5. Dr Parry’s Questions on notice to PLCC Dr Tom Parry

   5.1 What should be the objectives/s of State Government funding assuming that the total level will continue at current levels?

   5.2 What are the pros and cons of the per capita funding component?
5.3 What "disadvantage/disability" factors are most relevant to public library funding?

5.4 What is the scope for more effective delivery of public library services from networking?

5.5 What should library development grants be focussed on (if indeed they should be part of State Government funding)?

**Action:** For discussion and recommendation

6. State Government Funding for NSW Public Libraries
Chairperson, Public Libraries Consultative Committee

6a Summary of recommendations

**Action:** For discussion and recommendation

7. Overview of submissions by each Association
Association nominee

7.1 Local Government and Shires Associations
7.2 Local Government Managers Australia
7.3 Public Libraries NSW – Country
7.4 Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan

**Action:** For information and discussion

8. Other business
Chairperson, Public Libraries Consultative Committee

**PLCC Terms of Reference: extract**

The Committee will:

- Provide policy advice to Library Council in relation to the provision of public library services in New South Wales
- Provide a consultative framework for the Library Council, the State Library and key stakeholders in local government concerning public library services in New South Wales
- Monitor the funding arrangements to provide advice to the Library Council on an annual basis
- Provide advice to Library Council on an annual basis concerning the development of guidelines for Library Development Grants
Public Libraries Consultative Committee (PLCC) Minutes

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In August 2007, the Minister for the Arts announced an independent review of public library funding in NSW, to be conducted by Dr Tom Parry. This extraordinary PLCC meeting has been called to give Dr Parry the opportunity to consult with the key public library stakeholders on the funding review. Mr Shane McMahon and Mr Martyn Killion from Arts NSW will be attending the meeting with Dr Parry.

Attendance
Robert Knight, Chair (Library Council), Lynne Makin (Public Libraries NSW – Country), Noel Baum (LGSA), Regina Sutton (State Librarian & CEO), Ewan Tolhurst (Public Libraries NSW – Country), Jan Richards (Public Libraries NSW – Country), Lia Chinnery (LGMA), Frances Sims (Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan), Kathleen Bresnahan (State Library), Sonya Phillips (Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan), Richard Fisher (Library Council), Beverley Giegerl (LGSA), Dr Thomas Parry (Public Library Grants and Subsidies Review), Martyn Killion (Arts NSW), Shane McMahon (arts NSW), Cameron Morley (State Library - Minutes)

Apologies
Paul Scully (Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan)

ACTION
1. Robert Knight welcomed Dr Parry, Martyn Killion and Shane McMahon

2. Meeting participants were introduced.

3. Robert Knight outlined the terms of engagement for the meeting. It was agreed that:
   - the discussion is to be framed around Dr Parry’s questions on notice
   - submissions from participant organisations would be discussed
   - the review is about the allocation method, not the level of State funding
   - the discussions today are confidential

4. Current Public Library Funding Strategy
Kathleen Bresnahan provided an overview of the current funding arrangements.
Further clarification of the Disability and Geographic Adjustment component was sought. After further discussion the following points were noted:

- the name of this component is misleading as just $750,000 of this $6.2m pool is allocated according to disabilities
- the remainder of the pool is allocated according to population
- this component of the funding is an amalgamation of components from the previous 1990 funding formula such as disabilities, base payments and additional funding provided by the State Government.

5. **Dr Parry’s Questions on notice to the PLCC**

The questions were addressed by meeting participants.

5.1 What should be the objective/s of State Government funding assuming that the total level will continue at current levels?

5.2 What are the pros and cons of the per capita funding component?

5.3 What “disadvantage/disability” factors are most relevant to public library funding?

5.4 What is the scope for more effective delivery of public library services from networking?

5.5 What should library development grants be focussed on (if indeed they should be part of State Government funding)?

A summary of the discussion is attached.

6. **State Government Funding for NSW Public Libraries – PLCC Recommendations**

The PLCC Chair presented the paper, outlining the components of the funding where PLCC recommends either retaining or reviewing.

It was unanimously agreed that the paper is submitted to Dr Parry.

The PLCC Chair noted that Library Council at its meeting of 22 October directed that the PLCC needs to take a flexible and open approach to the review, and that the recommendations put forward by the PLCC in the submission are a starting point. Dr Parry stated that he would consider the submission along with the discussions from this meeting.

7. **Overview of Submissions by each Association**
7.1 Local Government and Shires Association
7.2 Local Government Managers Australia
7.3 Public Libraries NSW – Country
7.4 Public Libraries NSW - Metropolitan

The Association submissions were presented to Dr Parry.

8. Other business

8.1 Dr Parry flagged that as a result of the review he may recommend the possibility that the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal conduct a wide-ranging review of the value that public libraries are bringing to their communities.

8.2 Sonya Phillips noted that the planned “Day of Action” is not endorsed by Public Libraries NSW – Metropolitan.

Meetings 2007
12 November 2007 - 10.30 to 12 noon

Meetings 2008
Monday 10 March 10:30-12

Monday 16 June - Planning 10.30-12, Lunch 12-1, Meeting 1-2.30

Monday 25 August - Meeting 2-3.30, Meet with Library Council 4-5

Monday 24 November -10.30-12pm

The meeting closed at 12.35pm.
Agenda Item 5: Summary of discussion

5.1 What should be the objective/s of State Government funding assuming that the total level will continue at current levels?

- Objectives and programs ought to be based on meeting the goals of the State Plan.
- Communities need strong access to free information.
- Funds need to go universally to councils to underpin a network. There are not that many “rich” councils, and the State funds are required to encourage councils to provide services under the Library Act 1939.
- There will be issues should differential funding be introduced. If metropolitan councils have reduced funding what incentive is there for them to comply with the Act? Collegiate nature of network would be compromised.
- The threshold at which some councils may withdraw has been reached. When funding is under threat councils are more likely to canvass the idea.
- The reciprocal membership agreement is a very important feature of the network – this is likely to be the first thing to go if differential funding introduced.
- Need to guard against cost shifting from State to local government.
- Need to guard against funding convergence with other agencies, however partnerships can be successful.
- Funding should maximise the cohesiveness of the public library network and encourage collaborative activity for better value.
- State Government ought to view the network as infrastructure that delivers services not just information. Bear in mind 40% of NSW homes do not have pcs.
- State Government funding and Library Act 1939 has been instrumental in creating the network including the connectivity backbone (NSW.net). State Library participation is important in a leadership and coordination role.
- eGovernment services are important, but only one feature of library service. “Hub” of community.
Public libraries are exemplars of networking in local government. Critical role of State funding and State Library in maintaining this network.

5.2 What are the pros and cons of the per capita funding component?

- It was noted that the bulk of the subsidy and disability and geographic adjustment ($18m approximately) is allocated on a per capita basis.

**Pros**
- Local government gets constancy, and the disability component provides some balance, albeit small.
- Regional library services use per capita to divide costs among member councils.
- Is equitable

**Cons**
Not indexed to population growth, so funds are taken from the Library Development Grants to make up the shortfall. This has had a high impact on innovation and compromised the ability of councils to develop libraries.

- Regional Libraries
Regional libraries were discussed under this question. Regionalism works well in rural areas and creates positive economies of scale. In metropolitan areas many cooperative arrangements exist that promote sharing of resources.

- State Library role
The role of the State Library of NSW in the network was discussed. The State Library was described as the “glue”.

It was noted that a strength of the NSW system is the funding and coordinating role that is played by the State Library, and that other States do not have as effective a system.

The PLCC was asked whether it would recommend allocating more to the Cooperative and Networking funds administered by the State Library. The PLCC agreed that in the event that more funds were to be made available that there would be value in allocating more funding to these activities, but in the absence of enhanced funding the current balance is appropriate.

It was noted that the State Library’s advisory services, regular visits to libraries and attendance at zone and region meetings are valuable to the network. The relationship is dynamic as the State Library also learns from public libraries. Value also accrues as the State Library’s knowledge of public library exemplars can be communicated to the rest of the network.
5.3 What “disadvantage/disability” factors are most relevant to public library funding?

Should there be a reasonably significant pool of disability funding as part of the Grants and Subsidies?

It was noted that even at $750k there is noticeable benefit for smaller isolated councils. Is this enough?

It was noted that the purchase and maintenance of NESB collections is more cost and labour intensive than items in English.

It was agreed that disability factors are important and there was agreement that there should be more scope for their use, however with no growth in the total funding expanding the use of disability factors will disadvantage a number of councils.

It was asked whether a discretionary approach rather than a formulaic approach to disabilities may have merit. Is there a role for grants in this area? It was agreed that there may be a place for a discretionary approach as long as there was a transparent framework – worth exploring, but it was noted that smaller libraries may not have the expertise to put forward submissions.

If there are changes it ought to be phased in.

Library Council could set strategic directions for funding.

5.4 What is the scope for more effective delivery of public library services from networking?

It was agreed that the activities funded under this program are valuable, and that the ability to conduct relevant research and professional development ought to be retained as there are no alternative avenues that would be as effective.

The statistics database is of great value to all NSW libraries.

5.5 What should library development grants be focussed on (if indeed they should be part of State Government funding)?

It was agreed that the Library Development grants are valuable and should be retained. Concern was expressed that funding reductions are being applied to the grants.

It was noted that the existence of the grants leverages significant funding commitments from councils for projects.
It was noted that the grants are not just for capital items, but also for local and Statewide initiatives. Retaining a level of flexibility enables innovation.